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Items for discussion and decision: Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the present report, which was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2016/220 and past practices, it is suggested that a Friends of the Chair Group be created to prepare for the twenty-fifth anniversary, in 2019, of the adoption by the Statistical Commission of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

* E/CN.3/2017/1.

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I. Background

1. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics,[1] initially developed in Europe in 1990-1991, were first adopted on the global level by the Statistical Commission at its special session, held from 11 to 15 April 1994 (E/1994/29, para. 59). Upon the recommendation of the Commission, the Fundamental Principles were subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2013/21 of 24 July 2013 and by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/261 of 29 January 2014. The endorsement by the Assembly marked the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Principles by the Commission.

2. From 2011 to 2015, a Friends of the Chair Group worked on selected dimensions of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles in connection with the twentieth anniversary of their adoption. The Group was tasked with revising and updating the language of the preamble of the Principles in order to take into account new developments since the time when the Principles had first been formulated, assessing how they could be re-enforced and developing a practical guide for the implementation of the Principles, to include new developments and good practices by national statistical offices, other producers and users of statistics (E/2011/24, chap. I.B, decision 42/111). In carrying out that mandate, the Group (a) developed a revised preamble to the Principles, which was adopted by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session, held from 26 February to 1 March 2013 (E/2013/24, chap. I.C, decision 44/102); (b) conducted, together with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, a review of the implementation of the Principles by Member States, the results of which were reported to and discussed by the Commission at that session;[2] (c) developed implementation guidelines;[3] (d) explored ways to effectively address perceived non-compliance with the Principles (E/CN.3/2015/18, paras. 14-31);[4] and (e) reflected upon how the applicability of the Principles could be extended beyond the realm of official statistics, specifically to the private sector.

3. At its forty-sixth session, held from 3 to 6 March 2015, the Statistical Commission requested the Statistics Division to report back to the Commission in 2017 on the progress of work in the field of the implementation of the Principles within the context of the preparation for the twenty-fifth anniversary, in 2019, of the adoption of the Principles (E/2015/24, chap. I.C, decision 46/112, para. (d)).

II. Matters for discussion and decision by the Statistical Commission

4. In line with its decisions 45/101 (see E/2014/24, chap. I.B) and 46/112 and in connection with documents E/CN.3/2014/2 and E/CN.3/2015/18, the Statistical Commission may wish to consider establishing a Friends of the Chair Group with the following mandate:

[1] Available, with background, at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx.
[2] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/globreview.aspx.
[3] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/impguide.aspx.
[4] See also http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-18-FP-E.pdf.

(a) To develop and agree on suitable tools and methods for assessing the implementation of the Fundamental Principles;

(b) To conduct a global assessment before its fiftieth session in 2019, which will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Principles by the Statistical Commission;

(c) To review and, if necessary, update the current implementation guidelines;

(d) To re-evaluate the mechanisms focused on how to best address perceived non-compliance with the Fundamental Principles;

(e) To examine any matters relating to the Fundamental Principles as they may arise in other contexts, such as quality assurance or the use of non-official and non-traditional data.